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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH MOD SILVA ON AFGHANISTAN DEPLOYMENT

CLASSIFIED BY: Brian A. Nichols, Charge d'Affaires, Department of
State, EXEC; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (S/NF) The Ambassador met with Colombian Defense Minister Gabriel Silva and Vice Minister Sergio Jaramillo on October 1, ¶2009. Silva told the Ambassador that the Government of Colombia (GOC) wants to complete the U.S.-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) and review of Track II issues prior to deployment of Colombian troops to Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Silva noted the GOC wants to accelerate deployment with Spanish troops under NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The Ambassador also raised human rights, recommending that the Defense Ministry resume its past practice of conducting regular human rights consultations with the U.N. High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and interested Ambassadors. End Summary.

COLOMBIAN DEPLOYMENT TO AFGHANISTAN

¶2. (S/NF) In response to the Ambassador's query, MOD Silva said that the GOC's position on deploying forces to Afghanistan is that any deployment must take into account the proper strategic communications message, sequencing and timing. He noted the GOC wants to complete the signing of the DCA and review of Track II issues before proceeding with a deployment under OEF.

¶3. (S/NF) Silva continued that the GOC wants to accelerate its potentially less controversial deployment with Spanish troops as part of NATO's ISAF. While Silva acknowledged that this could mean the GOC may deploy with ISAF before it deploys under OEF, he indicated this is not a requirement. The Ambassador said that he would tell U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) that the 7th Special Forces Group should operate on the assumption that Colombian forces would not be ready to deploy with them in Afghanistan this fall.

GOC OFFERS COUNTER-NARCOTICS EXPERIENCE

¶4. (C) Vice Minister of Defense Sergio Jaramillo said that he thinks that the counter-narcotics issue in Afghanistan and Pakistan is viewed too narrowly. He said that Colombia might offer some specific expertise in this area. Jaramillo recalled that his participation in the launch of CSIS' new report, "Countering Threats to Security and Stability in a Failing State: Lessons from Colombia," had generated some interesting ideas in that regard. He noted that CSIS' Anthony Cordesman has offered a number of interesting lessons from Colombia as well as false parallels in contrasting events in Afghanistan and Colombia. Jaramillo also noted that he had useful conversations with USG officials on Afghanistan during his most recent trip to the United States.

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HUMAN RIGHTS CONSULTATIONS

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¶5. (SBU) The Ambassador stated that regular human rights consultations between then Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos and UNHCHR as well as interested Ambassadors had been useful in the past. He asked Jaramillo to resume the practice. Jaramillo said that he had already discussed this with MOD Silva and that Silva planned to continue these meetings.

NICHOLS